



May 2019

Country Report

Indonesia

President Jokowi wins the election in Indonesia

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President Joko Widodo, known as Jokowi, has won the presidential election clearly with 55.5% of the vote and can now continue to govern the country for another five years. His challenger, ex-General Prabowo Subianto, who came to 44.5% of the vote, does not want to admit his defeat and will appeal against the result at the Constitutional Court for alleged election manipulation. The official election results were announced by the Indonesian Election Commission KPU on the 21th May 2019, one month after the actual Election Day, but one day earlier than the scheduled deadline on 22 May.

On April 17, 2019 Indonesia's first joint presidential and parliamentary election was held, where next to the president and his vice president also the members of both houses of parliament, DPD and DPR and representatives of two local parliaments were elected.

The simultaneous elections were a huge logistical challenge for the largest Muslim country with a population of 260 million people spread over more than 18,000 islands. Eligible to vote (registered) were 190 million voters who were able to give their vote in more than 800,000 polling stations in all parts of the country. They had to punch with a nail the names of their candidates in five different election lists and then mark their little finger with a non-washable ink. To ensure a smooth and transparent election process, about seven million helpers were involved.

Over 400 helpers died on their enormous and exhausting mission. The voter participation was surprisingly high at about 80%, higher than five years ago (72%).

The candidates

The same opponents appeared in the presidential election against each other as in 2014: The current incumbent Joko Widodo and his challenger Prabowo Subianto. The fact that no other candidate entered the race is due to the new electoral law passed in 2017, according to which a potential candidate needs to have the support of at least one fifth (20%) of the members of the parliament or a party / coalition with at least 25% of the votes in the last election. Since no Indonesian party fulfilled those criteria alone, alliances and coalitions had to be made. This makes Indonesian politics complex and changeable.

Interesting was the selection of contenders for the office of the Vice President, who campaigned as partner with the respective presidential candidates. Jokowi decided shortly before the deadline for the election registration on August 10, 2018, surprisingly for the Islamic cleric Ma'ruf Amin. He is a leader of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia and was chairman of the Conservative Indonesian Islamic Council, Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI). The MUI has a great influence on politics and the society of Indonesia. They issue, among others, fatwas (non-binding religious judgments) on various actual issues, which are nevertheless understood by the Muslim population as a binding rule.

That Jokowi has chosen the 76-year-old cleric Amin as his Vice President is explained that the president wanted to protect himself against attacks and hate campaigns from the Islamist camp. At the gubernatorial election of Jakarta 2017, the then incumbent and Jokowi's allies, Basuki Purnama (called Ahok) was confronted for alleged anti-muslimism statements with mass protests and demonstrations in Jakarta and finally accused of blasphemy and sentenced to two years in prison. Ahok is ethnic Chinese and Christian, a double minority in Indonesia. Even Jokowi himself was defamed in the presidential election 2014 with false claims about his alleged lack of religiosity and presumed Chinese ancestry.

Jokowi was supported by an alliance of nine parties, led by his mother party PDI-P (The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle) whose chairman is Megawati Sukarnoputri daughter of Soekarno, the founder of the state and first president. The PDI-P is considered a social democratic and nationally oriented party.

Ex-General Prabowo was supported by five parties, belong them his own party Gerindra and the Democratic Party of former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. As candidate for the Vice-President position, Prabowo has chosen the entrepreneur Sandiaga Uno. Uno is one of the richest people in Indonesia and was previously Deputy of the Governor of Jakarta, Anies Baswedan. His rather youthful image (he is 49) gave the impression that Prabowo wanted to address in the presidential election, especially the important target group of young voters. The ex-general also has very good contacts with Islamist circles and is suspected of being one of the strippers behind the campaign against Ahok.

The election campaign

The election campaign started on September 23, 2018 with a commitment of all candidates to a peaceful and fair competition and ended on April 13, 2019, four days before the ballot. Alongside the candidates for the presidential and vice-president position, a total of 16 political parties were admitted to the elections, four other local parties joined in addition in the autonomous province of Aceh. Despite fears that the campaign might be overshadowed by ethnic and religious conflicts and the dissemination of false propaganda, the election campaign was essentially conflict-free and frictionless.

In surveys, Jokowi has been with over 50%, consistently for months clearly ahead over Prabowo (about 30%) however, the challenger still had some potential to catch up. Already in the presidential elections in 2014 Jokowi won despite his big lead in the polls at the end narrowly against Prabowo.

The Results

The official result shows now a clear lead for Jokowi, of nearly 10%, which equates to a difference of almost 17 million votes. Even if there may have been individual irregularities and errors in the counting the accusation of systematic election fraud by Prabowo will be difficult to prove.

Jokowi was able to obtain the majority in 21 of the 34 Indonesian provinces, 13 provinces went to Prabowo. Crucial for the victory of Jokowi were the high percentage of votes (up to 70%) in central and eastern Java, the two most populous provinces of Indonesia. Prabowo, meanwhile, received high approval from conservative Islamic voters in North and West Sumatra, in West Java and Sulawesi.

From the political parties The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) emerged as the strongest force with 19.33% of the vote, followed by Gerindra (12.57%) and Golkar (12.31%). Due to the layout of the constituencies, Golkar will probably still get more seats than Gerindra in the House of Representatives DPR and thus the second largest fraction. A total of nine parties have managed to enter parliament, there is a 4% threshold.

Interestingly, the Islamic parties did not collect more than 30% of the votes, an indication that the Indonesians do not want Islamization of politics.

Riots after the election announcement

The evening after the official election results were announced, protest demonstrations took place in central Jakarta by Prabowo supporters. Because riots were expected after the election announcement, the electoral commission KPU had moved forward the announcement of the results by one day. The street protests led to riots and violent clashes between demonstrators and the security forces, seven people were killed.

Prabowo had already alleged systematic forgery and manipulation during the vote count. On May 24, 2019, his lawyers filed a lawsuit for election fraud at the Constitutional Court. Already in 2014, Prabowo had appeal against the election result in court, but without success.

Conclusion

The Constitutional Court will make its decision to the election results by the end of June. Should the electoral fraud not be confirmed, Joko Widodo and Ma'ruf Amin will be declared as elected President and Vice President of Indonesia. The inauguration and government formation then takes place on October 20, 2019.

In a second and final term of President Jokowi (according to the Constitution, he is only allowed to take office twice) no significant changes in the Indonesian politics are expected. Jokowi had already announced that he would continue to prioritize improving social conditions and infrastructure development in his policies. Vice President Amin will probably focus primarily on religious projects, so he could take over the supervision of the construction of an Islamic economic sector in Indonesia.

Table: Results of parliamentary elections in Indonesia 2019

Parliamentary elections in Indonesia 2019				
	Party	%	Seat allocation (575 seats)	In comparison to 2014
Jokowi	PDI-P	19,33	128	+19
	Golkar	12,31	85	-6
	PKB	9,69	58	+12
	Nasdem	9,05	59	+23
	PPP	4,52	19	-20
	Perindo	2,67	0	not participated
	PSI	1,89	0	not participated
	Hanura	1,54	0	-16
	PBB	0,79	0	0
	PKPI	0,22	0	0
	Prabowo	Gerindra	12,57	78
PKS		8,21	50	+10

	Demokrat	7,77	54	-7
	PAN	6,84	44	-4
	Berkarya	2,09	0	not participated

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